

Wherefore, having thus described the present invention, what is claimed

is:

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1. A computer-implemented process for allowing a user to manipulate an email address contained in the preview pane or full message window of an email message of an email program as an object, comprising using a computer to perform the following acts:

identifying an entry in the preview pane or full message window of an email message as an email address;

10 checking the email address against addresses in one or more contact databases;

marking the email address with an adjacently placed indicator; and

upon selection of the indicator by the user, allowing the user to manipulate the email address as an object.

- 15 2. The computer-implemented process of claim 1 wherein the identifying step comprises:

finding at least one field in the preview pane or full message window containing an email message header of the email message containing one or  
20 more email addresses; and

parsing at least one email address from the at least one email address field.

3. The computer-implemented process of claim 2 wherein the act of checking comprises:

reviewing each email address to determine if it is contained in a contact database, wherein a contact database is a set of stored contacts and corresponding addresses.

5 4. The computer-implemented process of claim 3 wherein the act of reviewing comprises at least one of:

determining if the address corresponds to a single contact in the contact

10 list;

determining if the address corresponds to a mailing list in the contact list;

determining if the address corresponds to a newsgroup address in the contact list;

determining if the address corresponds to an invalid email address or internet address;

determining if the address corresponds to a valid email address not found to match any addresses in the contact list.

15 5. The computer-implemented process of claim 4 wherein the act of reviewing further comprises determining if the address corresponds to an address in a contact list of at least one server whenever it is determined the address is a valid email address not found to match any address in the contact list.

6. The computer-implemented process of claim 4 wherein the act of marking comprises at least one of:

- appending a single recipient icon to the address if the address matches an address in the contact list;
- 5 appending a mailing list icon to the address if the address matches a mailing list address in the contact list;
- appending a newsgroup icon to the address if the address matches a newsgroup address in the contact list;
- 10 appending a text icon to the address if the address is an invalid email address or an Internet address; and
- appending an address icon to the address if the address is determined to be a valid email address but not in the contact list.

15 7. The computer-implemented process of claim 5, wherein the act of marking comprises appending a server icon to the address if the address matches an entry in the contact list of said one or more servers.

8. The computer-implemented process of claim 5, wherein the act of marking  
20 comprises appending a caution icon to the address if the address does not match any entry in the contact list of said one or more servers, said caution icon indicating to the user that the address is not found in any contact list accessible by the user.

9. The computer-implemented process of claim 5 wherein, prior to performing the act of determining if the address corresponds to an address in the contact list of said one or more servers, performing the acts of:

5 ascertaining whether the user's computer is in correspondence with said one or more servers;

if the user's computer is not in correspondence with said one or more servers,

appending an icon indicating to the user that more information is

10 needed before sending the email message;

flagging the address such that the act of determining if the address corresponds to an address in the contact list of said one or more servers must be performed prior to sending the email message; and

prompting the user to establish correspondence with said one or

15 more servers; and wherein

said act of determining if the address corresponds to an address in the contact list of said one or more servers is performed whenever the user establishes a correspondence with said one or more servers and either (i) initiates sending the email message, or (ii) instructs the computer to perform said 20 act of determining.

10. The computer-implemented process of claim 6 wherein the act of identifying an entry in the preview pane or full message window of an email

message as an email address in an incoming email message comprises initially appending an icon representing an indeterminate indicator to all email addresses in the header that are not in a "From" address field, and where the acts of checking and marking these email addresses is postponed until processor 5 background cycles can be used to perform the checking and marking unless a user initiates a search command directing that one or more of these addresses be subjected to checking and marking immediately.

11. The computer-implemented process of claim 10 wherein the indeterminate 10 icon appended to addresses in the email header that are not in the From address field is replaced with an appropriate icon when the checking and marking acts are performed.
12. The computer-implemented process of claim 1 wherein the email 15 message is an outgoing email message prepared by a user, and wherein the act of identifying comprises determining if the email address was autofilled from a contact database or server database.
13. The computer-implemented process of claim 12 wherein the act of 20 marking comprises marking the autofilled email address with an appropriate indicator based on the source used to autofill the email address.

14. The computer-implemented process of claim 13 wherein the act of marking the autofilled email address with the appropriate indicator comprises the acts of :

appending a single recipient icon to the address if the address matches an

5 address in the contact list;

appending a mailing list icon to the address if the address matches a mailing list address in the contact list;

appending a newsgroup icon to the address if the address matches a newsgroup address in the contact list; and

10 appending a server icon to the address if the address was autofilled from a contact list of a server.

15. The computer-implemented process of claim 1 wherein the act of manipulating comprises one of moving, deleting, or copying the object.

15 16. The computer-implemented process of claim 15 wherein the act of selecting an indicator comprises an act of selecting the indicator via an activation action associated with an input device.

20 17. The computer-implemented process of claim 1 further comprising the act of allowing a user to open an entry in the contact database associated with the address via an activation action associated with an input device.

18. The computer-implemented process of claim 1 further comprising the act  
of prompting a user to create an entry associated with the address in the contact  
database via an activation action associated with an input device whenever such  
an entry does not already exist in the contact database.

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19. The computer-implemented process of claim 1 wherein the act of selecting an indicator further comprises an act of displaying an appropriate contextual menu depending on the type of indicator associated with said address.

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10 20. The computer-implemented process of claim 19 wherein the act of  
displaying an appropriate contextual menu further comprises adding an email  
address to a user's contact list and wherein an email address is added to the  
user's contact data base upon selection of the menu item.

15 21. The computer-implemented process of claim 20 wherein the user has an option to open a window containing editable content associated with an email address if a contact who sent the email message is in the user's contact data base.

20 22. The computer-implemented process of claim 1 further comprising the act  
of using a computer to open an item associated with the email address after  
looking up the item in one or more contact databases when the user double  
clicks on the adjacently placed indicator.

23. The computer-implemented process of claim 22 further comprising the prompting the user to create an item associated with said indicator if the address was manually entered or captured from a server.

5 24. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for allowing a user to manipulate an email address contained in the preview pane or full message text of an email message as an object, said computer-executable instructions comprising:

recognizing an entry in the preview pane or full message text of an

10 email message as an email address;

checking the email address against addresses in one or more

contact databases;

marking the email address with an adjacently placed icon; and

upon selection of the icon by the user, allowing the user to

15 manipulate the email address as an object.

25. A system for allowing a user to manipulate an email address contained in an email message as an object, comprising

a general purpose computing device,

20 a user interface for dynamically interfacing a user to the computer device,

wherein the user is provided with a display of an icon appended to the email

address which is indicative of the pedigree of the email address and said user

interface allows a user to select the icon and associated address, and when selected allows the user to manipulate the email address as an object;

a computer program comprising program modules executable by the computing device, wherein the computing device is directed by the program

5   modules of the computer program to,

      identify an entry in the preview pane or full message window of an email message as an email address;

      check the email address against addresses in one or more contact databases; and

10     mark the email address with an adjacently placed icon.

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